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ABSTRACT

The Language by Radio Interest Group (LBRIG) Newsletter, volume 4, number 1, opens with an appeal to subscribers to contribute articles, reports, notes etc. The annual ACTFL workshop held on 29 Nov. 1975 is then described. It features a report by Dolores Zesiger, instructor in Spanish at Logan (Ohio) High School, on the interesting use of local Spanish radio programs. Also participating in the workshop will be Bob Nelson, describing new curriculum patterns involving production and reception of radio programs, and Richard Wood reporting on current and prospective listening opportunities, and presenting recordings of shortwave reception. Feature articles in the newsletter include; (1) "Kit-Form Equipment in Foreign Language Broadcast Listening," by Herbert De Ley dealing with advantages of owning and assembling shortwave receivers for foreign language broadcasts, and (2) "Outline for a Contemporary Civilization Course Based on Radio," by Pierre Trescases which offers specific suggestions on how to use radio to broaden civilization courses. (CLK)

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L B R I G Newsletter

The Trimestrial Publication
of the
LANGUAGE BY RADIO INTEREST GROUP

Vol. IV - Number 1 September 1975

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STATION IDENTIFICATION: The Managing Editor's Corner

We open the fourth volume of our Newsletter with an

URGENT APPEAL TO SUBSCRIBERS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

As you have undoubtedly noted, your editors have found themselves relying on a fairly small number of radio-adepts as authors of articles, reports, notes, etc. in these pages over the past three years. We assure you that this is in no way the mark of an "old-boy" mentality or, pun-intended, "network." As you can well understand, in the nature of many fledgling enterprises, we have simply found ourselves dependent on fellow-enthusiasts up to this stage. But we are now quite ready to be "upstaged", eagerly looking, in fact, to depend on the enthusiasm, interest, expertise and imagination of our present subscribers and those whom we hope you will put on to the Newsletter. May we, therefore, urge you to send us contributions for forthcoming numbers? Four double-spaced typewritten pages is the maximum on subjects as diverse as you think appropriate within the guiding concept of our acronym: Language-by-Radio-Interest. Remember that "radio" is a very latitudinarian concept with us, extending not only through the local AM and FM bands where you live and onto shortwave bands, but also includes "radio-related" media like TV, telephone and videophone. Please send your contributions to me, as Managing Editor, at the address given at the end of this section. On the new trimestrial publication schedule, numbers will appear in mid-September, mid-January and mid-April. It would help, therefore, to have contributions one month in advance of these publication dates.

FL00 7079

ACTFL WORKSHOP: SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 1975, 9:00 A.M.-10:30 A. Monroe East, Washington Hilton, Washington, D.C. Plans are now firm for this important follow-up to last year's well-attended session. Chaired by Professor Richard E. Wood, this year's session will feature an expanded report by our colleague, Delores Zediger, Instructor in Spanish at Logan (Ohio) High School, on the interesti use of local radio in Spanish reported in Volume III, No. 2 (April 1975) of the Newsletter. Bob Nelson will describe some new curricu patterns involving production as well as reception of radio progra

Ricard Wood will report on current and prospective listening opportunities in shortwave as well as present some recordings of (and, hopefully, if technical conditions permit, live) shortwave reception. Chairman Wood also reports that world radio stations have been most cooperative in providing materials for distribution at the workshop. Needless to say, in the same spirit that we call above for written contributions to the Newsletter, we call for oral contributions from those of you at the workshop. May you be "numbrous!"

Robert J. Nelson
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FEATURE ARTICLES

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KIT-FORM EQUIPMENT IN FOREIGN-LANGUAGE BROADCAST LISTENING

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SHORTWAVE listening for language learning purposes might be called an interface interest. That is, teachers and students of foreign languages may or may not feel at home with the innards of electronic equipment, and yet the technicalities of electronics may help them receive foreign language broadcasts more clearly or more consistently. In particular, one means to optimum shortwave listening capabilities, for an individual or an institution with limited budget, is constructing one's own shortwave receiver, antenna, or other listening-improving accessories.

Fortunately, a number of very admirable shortwave receivers and accessories are available in carefully worked-out kit form. Although decreasing competition and increased expenses have brought the cost of kits closer to that of assembled equipment in recent years, kit costs are still less than those of comparable assembled and finished units. Where costs are close to those of finished equipment, kit models may offer more listening-improving features for the money. Such kits, can, in any case, be assembled successfully by anyone who feels even slight interest in working with simple tools. They can be assembled with ease during slack time by the full or part-time laboratory technicians employed to repair language laboratory equipment in schools, colleges and universiti s

Such kits are definitely within the capabilities of any language teacher motivated to improve language listening opportunities for students.

The electronic kit market is presently dominated by a single corporation, the Heath Company, of Benton Harbor, Michigan(zip code 49022). An additional source of shortwave listening equipment kits is the EICO Company, 283 Malta Street, Brooklyn, NY 11207. Both will send catalogs to people writing to the addresses above.

Problems of selection of a receiver kit are similar to those involving shortwave listening equipment generally. Prices are difficult to compare precisely, not only because of shipping and labor time differences (if these must be charged to an institutiona budget), but because of differences in features offered at a given price. In this respect, it should be noted that certain of the features often designed into communications receivers are of limite use to the foreign-language-interest user, who tunes primarily to AM broadcasts. Actually useful features are crystal calibration, antenna trim or preselector, noise limiting, and effective slow automatic volume control. Not very useful for the shortwave broadcast listener, however, are receive-standby capability, too general frequency coverage, and anything (such as BFO, RF gain controls, or CW/SSB mode switch which is useful for single sideband or Morse code listening only). Bandspread controls may be calibrate or uncalibrated; calibrated bandspread is not especially useful if calibrations are keyed to the amateur bands rather than the broadcast bands. Selective sensitivity controls may or may not be useful: the more or less standard 5 kHz configuration is most appropriate for broadcast listening, but occasionally controllable selectivity (down to, perhaps 2.5 kHz) is an advantage in blocking out unvanted signals, especially for recording purposes. While both factory-assembled and kit-form receivers are often compromises, offering features intended for both broadcast and ham listening, one may occasionally gain some advantage by sacrificing features not needed in favor of desired features or overall quality.

To date the author has assembled two shortwave receivers, a Q-multiplier, and a crystal calibrator from kits. All of these items could be assembled without incident from the parts and instructions provided. Tools required in addition to the kit were a small soldering iron (large irons may, apparently, damage some parts because of excessive heat), pliers, a screwdriver, single side cutters, and a knife or wire stripper. All these tools are available form any hardware store and most discount or five-and-dime outlets.

Typical assembly begins with a parts list against which to check parts provided (this author has not yet found a part missing from a kit as shipped). Some lists include pictures and other instructions for identifying the various components. The next step is assembling one or more circuit boards. These are plastic

sheets pre-printed with foil circuits and with pre-drilled holes for the various parts. The assembler fits the wires or lugs of each component into the proper holes (following step-by-step instructions, a picture diagram, and indications printed on the circuit board itself). When a good number of components have been fitted to the board, they are soldered (instructions and suggestions for practice, if necessary, are included) and the excess lengths of wire are clipped off. Later steps include attaching circuit boards to the chassis, and wiring heavier components, such as the power supply, tuning capacitors, and a few others. Step-by-step instructions typically specify lengths to cut connecting wires and lengths to strip insulation at each end to connect various sections of the unit.Most kits are careful also to provide dial and case parts which give the kit assembler equipment with the appearance and mechanical stability of factory-assembled receivers of similar quality.

The final steps are checkout (to assure that the unit is operating properly; suggestions for remedies are provided) and alignment. Alignment is a kind of tuning of adjustable components so that they work harmoniously with each other. Kit instructions typically explain how to explain the receiver as is, but typically also give instructions for alignment "with instruments." Instruments required for a receiver may be an RF signal generator and/or VTVM (vacum-tube voltmeter). While most individuals do not possess such instruments and will not wish to buy them for alignment of a single project (combined minimum cost perhaps eighty dollars), some college or high school institutional users may find that science laboratories or language laboratory maintenance facilities can provide some or all of the needed equipment. While results are satisfying after alignment without instruments, some users may wish to pay the fifteen to thirty-five dollars required for instrument alignment by the local radio repair or ham equipment service facility. Instrument alignment can sometimes make the needed difference in satisfying reception of relatively difficult stations.

Shortwave receiver kits are sometimes advertised as "five-evening"or"ten-evening" assembly projects. In the author's experience, such estimates are not at all unrealistic, and an enthusiastic assembler may complete and operate a shortwave receiver in somewhat less time. The author's own first kit-form receiver, assembled in three days, was used for a year or so and then sold to a secondary school for the price of the unassembled kit and used there for some years thereafter. The author's second receiver, assembled in perhaps ten days, has served without difficulty for some years since then, and can presumably be recommended to users similarly interested in foreign-language broadcast listening.

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OUTLINE FOR A CONTEMPORARY CIVILIZATION COURSE

BASED ON RADIO

Pierre Trescases, Teaching Assistant

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At the level of higher education, it is possible to conceive of a civilization course per se, based on listenings to radio news as well as on speeches, interviews and commentaries which follow them or which have been inserted. Radio can, as Patricia Biggs has said, allow students "to understand a country in its activity and today's reality; intelligent knowledge of living conditions and present events depended upon the knowledge of three additional important domains: France's present position in economic, social and political fields." "Civilisation Contemporaine et Enseignement de la Langue," Le Français dans le Monde, No. 62, pp. 12-14.

It is evident that a single civilization course cannot have too large a scale for the programs which it contemplates. However, the objectives are similar: to use materials both oral and written to introduce the student to contemporary civilization and, at the same time, to improve his oral and written expression in the foreign language.

The uncut event introduced in class through tape recording needs of course to be "filled out". This is where the use of the other available new sources comes in: newspapers, magazines, works dealing with study themes, etc. It is needless to stress the diversity of exercises which the study of these materials can generate. Distribution of these exercises (discussions, debates, projects, reports, etc.) in class or outside the classrooms permits a proportioning of the written and oral elements which are essential to the "living" language improvement.[1]

We give a few short guiding lines for the conduct of the course:

- select, according to important events which may take up news during the whole duration of the course, a few main themes which will be studied in depth (social unrest, economic crisis, next elections, results of centralization in territories). It would be interesting to find events pertaining to several general subjects.

[1] For application of transcripts of FL news broadcasts in a course based on listening, see Sandra J. Savignon, "A L'Ecoute de France-Inter: The Use of Radio in a Student Centered Oral French Class," French Review, 46, No. 2(Dec 1972), 342-49.

- make sure that these are covering a range of social, economic and political reality;

- use events which do not pertain to main subjects of study in order to provide variety, to relax the atmosphere, or to study a question which might only appear once in the news but which is nevertheless interesting (e.g., a hunger strike in jail). This diversity peculiar to news will break the monotony generated by the identical news items, week after week;

- take advantage - in order to maintain the students' attention - of events related to their own country as well as the one under study (a statesman's visit, a common economic project). The instinctive comparisons which they will make will need to be used. This will serve the goal of bicultural interaction.

Bibliography:

Robert J. Nelson and Richard E. Wood, "Radio in Foreign Language Education," No. 11, CAL-ERIC/CLL Series on Languages & Linguistics. Pp. 26. 1975. Available ($1.95 hard-copy, 76 cents microfiche) from ERIC Document Reproduction Service, Computer Microfilm International Corporation, P.O. Box 190, Arlington, VA 22210.

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